

The Age of Options: Why There's Still Only One Way to Eternal Life

We live in an unprecedented era—what some have called "the age of options." Walk into any restaurant and you're handed what feels like a novel instead of a menu. Turn on your television and face thousands of streaming choices. Even something as simple as buying candy now requires navigating through dozens of varieties. M&Ms alone come in over 50 flavors. Who knew we needed Mexican jalapeño peanut M&Ms?

This explosion of choices might seem like progress, but research tells a different story. Psychologists have identified phenomena like "decision fatigue" and "cognitive overload"—some even call it being "over-choiced." A fascinating Columbia University study found that when shoppers faced 24 options for the same product, only 3% made a purchase. But when options were reduced to six, purchases jumped 900%.

The lesson? More choices don't necessarily lead to better decisions.

We've never had more options as a culture, yet we've never been more confused, anxious, or paralyzed by indecision. As one British author observed, our generation faces "a gluttony of choices, but with no clear sense of what is ultimately worth choosing."

One Truth in a World of Many Voices

Here's where things get interesting—and perhaps uncomfortable for modern sensibilities. While life may revolve around endless options, eternity comes down to one truth and one decision.

Jesus made this abundantly clear: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Notice the definite articles. Not *a* way, but *the* way. Not one option among many, but the singular path to God.

In an age that celebrates pluralism and relativism, this sounds almost offensive. How can there be only one way? Isn't that narrow-minded? Exclusive? Intolerant?

But what if the exclusivity isn't rooted in arrogance but in reality? What if Jesus isn't one religious leader among many, but something—someone—entirely different?

The Unique Claims of Christ

Jesus didn't present himself as merely a guide to God or a wise teacher pointing the way. He claimed to *be* God, with proprietary access granted only through him.

Consider his statement in John 8:58: "Before Abraham was, I am." Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, lived around 2000 BC. How could Jesus claim to exist before someone who predated his birth by two millennia? He was asserting his divine pre-existence.

The phrase "I am" wasn't chosen casually. It's Yahweh in Hebrew—the most sacred name for God in the Old Testament. When Moses asked God what name to give the Israelites, God replied, "I AM WHO I AM." This is the eternal, unchanging God speaking.

Jesus repeatedly used this designation for himself. He declared, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). He told his disciples, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

C.S. Lewis famously addressed this dilemma: You can't simply call Jesus a great teacher or wonderful humanitarian while ignoring his own words. He claimed to be God. Either he was lying, delusional on a catastrophic scale, or he was telling the truth. The first two options disqualify him from being a good person, leaving only one possibility: He is who he claimed to be—the Lord.

The Unique Death of Christ

Approximately 165,000 people die every day worldwide. Death itself isn't unique. Even crucifixion, as horrific as it was, wasn't uncommon in the Roman Empire. Historians estimate that 2 million people were executed by crucifixion during Roman rule. On one day in 71 BC, 6,000 people were crucified.

What makes Jesus' death different isn't the method—it's the meaning.

His death was sacrificial. Isaiah 53:5 prophesied centuries before Christ: "But he was pierced for our offenses, he was crushed for our wrongdoings. The punishment for our well-being was laid upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

When Pilate examined the evidence, he found no fault in Jesus. Jesus lived perfectly, never sinning. For that reason, he could offer his perfect life as an acceptable sacrifice for our imperfect, sinful lives.

The Bible states clearly: "Everyone has sinned and falls short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23). And "the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

With his dying breath, Jesus shouted from the cross, "It is finished." In his day, this word meant "paid in full"—purchase complete, transaction closed.

No other person in history has died to pay humanity's sin penalty. Only one. Just Jesus.

The Unique Resurrection

Every world religion has a leader. Every political movement has a founder. And every one of them has a grave marking their passing.

Buddha died and stayed dead. Mohammed died and stayed dead. Confucius died and stayed dead.

Only Jesus walked out of his grave.

On that first Easter Sunday, angels posted at the tomb announced, "He is not here. He has risen, just as he said."

Jesus' tomb was sealed with a Roman stamp signifying official burial. He didn't just appear dead—he was dead. But within three days, he was raised alive by the power of God.

And people saw him. They talked with him. They touched him. As many as 500 people witnessed him alive at the same time in the same place. No court in any jurisdiction can overlook the compelling evidence of 500 eyewitnesses testifying to the same reality.

As one pastor put it: "If someone predicts their death and resurrection, then pulls it off, we should go with whatever that guy says."

The Turning Point

One of the most powerful examples of a turning point happened on the day Jesus died. Two convicted criminals were crucified alongside him, one on each side. Initially, both mocked Jesus: "If you're the Messiah, save yourself—and us too!"

But as the crucifixion continued, something about this unique man in the middle caught one thief's attention. Maybe it was the way Jesus forgave his torturers. Maybe it was how he prayed unlike any priest this criminal had ever heard.

Whatever it was, one thief had a moment of clarity. He stopped ridiculing Jesus, looked over to him, and asked, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Think about that. A man who spent his life taking advantage of others, who was out of time with no opportunity to right his wrongs, turned to Jesus in one moment. Before the day ended, he landed in heaven.

He never attended a Bible study. He never got baptized. He knew nothing about church membership. Yet he made it. How? Because the man on the middle cross said he could come.

Where Is Jesus in Your Life?

Life may be full of options, but eternity comes down to one decision.

Imagine a circle representing your life. In the middle is a chair—the control center. Whoever or whatever sits in that seat guides your decisions, determines your values, leads your life.

Now mark where Jesus is. Is he inside the circle or outside? And if he's inside, is he in the control seat, or just somewhere in your life?

The Bible promises: "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). It also declares: "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Don't let pain blind you to what God is doing. Don't let your past shame you from the fresh start God offers. Don't let pride keep you quiet when you should speak up.

In the age of options, there is still only one hope for salvation. His name is Jesus. The cross of Christ alone can save.

And that's not narrow-mindedness—it's the most liberating truth in the universe.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Directly Quoted or Cited:

1. **John 14:6** - "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."
2. **Acts 4:12** - "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."
3. **John 8:58** - "Before Abraham was, I am."
4. **John 10:30** - "I and the Father are one."
5. **John 14:9** - "Anyone who's seen me has seen the Father."
6. **Isaiah 53:5** - "But he was pierced for our offenses. He was crushed for our wrongdoings. The punishment for our well-being was laid upon him. And by his wounds, we are healed."
7. **Romans 3:23** - "Everyone has sinned and we all fall short of God's glorious standing."
8. **Romans 6:23** - "The wages of our sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

9. **Matthew 28:6** (or parallel passages) - "He is not here. He has risen just as he said."

10. **2 Corinthians 5:17** - "For anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone and a new life has begun."

11. **Romans 10:13** - "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Alluded to or Referenced:

12. **Luke 23:39-43** - The account of the thief on the cross (criminals crucified with Jesus, one mocking, one asking to be remembered)

13. **1 Corinthians 15:6** - Reference to 500 eyewitnesses who saw Jesus alive after His resurrection

14. **Exodus 3:14** - The "I AM" name of God (Yahweh)

Relevant Verses for Main Themes (not directly mentioned but align with sermon content):

15. **John 11:25-26** - Jesus as the resurrection and the life

16. **1 Peter 2:24** - Christ bearing our sins in His body on the cross

17. **Philippians 2:8-11** - Christ's humility and exaltation

18. **Ephesians 2:8-9** - Salvation by grace through faith

19. **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** - The gospel: Christ died, was buried, and rose again

20. **Hebrews 4:15** - Jesus without sin